1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940).1946 AW37 Kol AW37

173 174 [619] six *kos* east of Rewa city. One of the Kol sub-divisions is called the Binj *kurhi*, and it seems to be generally considered the highest of all their divisions. This group does not seem to exist now-a-days, or at least they do not know where its members may be found, but the implication is that this is the highest group and so perhaps the first group, and that it had its origin in the Binj mountains, the modern Vindhya range of Central India. These mountains lie, generally speaking, to the west of the centre of the Kol population of the present time. The inference might be drawn from these facts that they are from the country to the west. Other informants said that the Kols came into Rewa from the north. It would thus appear that their traditions are very uncertain on this point. Other of their traditions look back to Chitrakot, in the Banda district, which is to the north-west of the present population centre.

173 539 A story is told by Kols that the *devatas* or gods were very happy at the birth of Rama and that they desired to celebrate it properly. What was the best form in which to enter the world, was the question they had to decide. They considered that part of the praise should be by song and drum—the *dholak*—so they conceived the idea that the best they could do would be to take the form of Kols. This they did and built a great temple at Chitrakot, sang songs and played the *dholak* there in honour of Rama. When asked further just why the *devatas* took the form of Kols the answer was a bit fuller than intimated at first. They said that the Kols were both the best labourers and the best singers in the world. No one could build the temple so efficiently and so speedily as they and also none like them could praise so acceptably. Therefore the gods came in the guise of Kols.

Quite consistently the Kols to whom we talked trace their origin back to a certain Sheori or Savari or Shivari, calling her 'The Mother of all Kols.' The name may possibly go back to the Savaras of the *Mahabharata*, although it seems more likely that it is based on a certain Ramayana story. The stories vary considerably but their main purport is as follows: There once lived a certain woman named Sheori. She is called by some Kolni (hence Kols) and by others Bhilni.[1] The latter term links the Kols and the Bhils together: this is quite a common, and significant occurrence in their stories. She was a faithful devotee of Bhagawan. Sometimes those who relate the stories call him Siva and at other times Krishna. She followed her lord always and it was her greatest desire to serve him in any way she could.

[193] 1 *'Ni'* is the feminine sign; thus 'Kolni' means a Kol woman. In the same manner 'Bhilni' means a Bhil woman.